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# Northern Review

## of Writing and the Arts in Canada

- **FOOTNOTE TO THE LORD'S PRAYER**
  A POEM BY KAY SMITH
- **POST-WAR WRITING IN NORWAY**
  BY IVAR HOLM
- **AWARD WINNERS---NEW AWARDS**

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# Northern Review

## CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| GUARANTORS' FUND | | 49 |
| AWARD WINNERS | | 23 |
| NEW AWARDS | | 51 |
| *STORIES* | | |
| THE PICNIC | DESMOND PACEY | 36 |
| *POETRY* | | |
| FOOTNOTE TO THE LORD'S PRAYER | KAY SMITH | 2 |
| TWO POEMS | ANNE WILKINSON | 19 |
| POEM OF ANXIETY | | 19 |
| THE UP AND DOWN OF IT | | 20 |
| TWO POEMS | ELIZABETH BREWSTER | 21 |
| LONDON FOG | | 21 |
| PEACE IS WHAT IS FOUND | | 22 |
| SONG OF A BUTTERMAKER | ELIZABETH KAIJA | 24 |
| TWO POEMS | J. K. HEATH | 32 |
| THE SEASON | | 32 |
| WIFE | | 33 |
| THREE POEMS | GEORGE JOHNSTON | 34 |
| THE BIG WOMAN | | 34 |
| PASTORALE | | 34 |
| REMEMBER BLEEKER STREET | | 35 |
| *REVIEWS* | | |
| POST-WAR WRITING IN NORWAY | IVAR HOLM | 15 |
| WHAT IS MUSIC? | CHESTER DUNCAN | 25 |
| TREASURE ISLAND--SUNSET BOULEVARD | BELLE POMER | 29 |
| *BOOKS* | | |
| THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES 1950 | DESMOND PACEY | 42 |
| THE RENAISSANCE | L. A. M. | 44 |
| ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES | EDWARD McCOURT | 44 |
| MY FAVORITE POEMS | J. S. | 46 |
| CORRESPONDENCE | | 47 |
| NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS | | 52 |



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# KAY SMITH

## *FOOTNOTE TO THE LORD'S PRAYER*

Our Father when morning walks on ocean,
when trees answer the light with birds in their speech,
when light turns gull wings all but transparent
for the wader in light seeking weightless to swim;
Our Father when morning goes down to the children
poised on the fringe of ocean and gathering off
the Point the endless brightness of seas to their mouths'
crescents, the knowledge and nearness of far that flows
with their movements at home in this flowing world;
Our Father when the common flower cleanses,
terse with the wit of sky and earth in its root,
when grass points to creation's inwardness,
trembling with a million shining clues in the light,
brushing the naked feet with living poems,
washing the multiple wishes with Oneness that is;
Our Father when morning walks on ocean,
Our Father in the shapes and voices of things,
in the featureless light around the heart, the cradle,
Son of light for the darkness in everyman.

Father who breaks
what cannot break,
held fast in the vise of its sinning,
stern with His love
when shut out is love,
holds a knife in the hands of His coming;
Glory and praise
to the lightning eyes,
to the ruthless hands in cutting,
from womb of night
leaps the Light,
the heart is all covered with morning.
Dance, dance
of deliverance,
the mountain, the stone is singing;

when for your delight
the August takes flight,
the heart is all covered with morning;
the cradle fits
the Guest it gets,
reach up to the eyes of His smiling,
and to those who come
speak not of your own
in the heart that is covered with morning,
but the One who has taken
whole what was broken
(the wounded wing is flying)
shall stretch out His hand,
as before Him they bend
(the crumpled flower is standing)
and touch each sad face
with you in His grace,
Our Father, Our Sun in the morning.

## *WHICH ART IN HEAVEN*

Which Art In Heaven the words are birds are clouds
sun moon stars the words are flying
the crimson golden spires of the trees are crowds
pointing waves like acrobats leaping
up and through the mansions of air and harping
wind on water in grass in leaves the music

## *HEAVEN WHICH ART IN HEAVEN OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN*

Heaven the heart somersaults in the air
like a juggler repeats the words the circles shining
into the well of the night bubble-light
delicately melting forming and rising
rising only to fade again then finally
heart topples with what has ceased to be light
the crown of the kingly word the meaning of Heaven

in the night burning the springs uncoiled of our waiting
stretched to unbearable breaking yet not breaking
tongues parched close to the living fountain

longing to drink yet forgetting the manner of drinking
in the desert of night the cool mirage of Heaven
the morning accepts "Farther than we can travel"
a thimbleful of water for us no longer asking
a grain of gladness in the soil a certain pleasure
justice has its own beauty also
drinking of every liquor the world offers
just that we be spurned who ourselves have turned
from the naked living water...

On grass bronze
- leaf spattered sits the bronze-thatched boy
whose geese-flown autumns count up now to five,
winds from topless sky bring messages of Heaven,
curl them in a leaf around his pink whorled ear,
whispering archly; with cool and grave delight
on the island of the leaf his fingers travel lightly,
while ripe October sun pours its richness
on him — at any moment now his eyes
may find a squirrel or even seek a dragon.
For him the far is but the edge of near,
lives in him and around, fits him like his skin,
and walking out he moves into his own vision.
While he and the world exchange themselves like mirrors,
passers-by whose gaze is shaded by a shadow
see only a red-headed boy of five,
read nothing approaching strange nor guess
of the country back of his candid eyes where each
created thing is a miracle for him
yet to be simply taken not with shock
or surprise but with a clear and familiar joy,
fruit, leaf, sun, the wafer on his tongue.

• • •

Afternoon works on the senses,
curls like down around limbs of the workers,
blurs the gash under the flesh
yearning nightly on crags of spirit;
a mirror tempts the salesgirl with Heaven,
catches the Shadow in the curve of her glance,
the Shadow now but the magic at seven,

hour of magic, flower in her hair,
Heaven in the wine glass, Heaven ringing
all its bells as he takes her hands,
folds her hand into his Heaven,
golden land, honey land,
solid gold of the millionaire.
Swing, heart; Sing, angel of brightness,
through the gold-paved streets of your Heaven,
Leap until you are stunned to gold,
who once moved with the freedom of water.

When, when will deliverance come?

Go down, go down, proud daughter,
go down with your limbs that burn like the sun,
go down in the night to the water,
to the depths of your sorrow, go down, child,
to the cold, stinging depths of your sorrow,
go down when the moon burns like a wound,
go down to the Shadow on the water.

• • •

In the lighted towers of Manhatten,
in the cocktail glasses of Long Island,
in the tenement kitchens of the nations
where light screams on faces,
in the bedrooms under the eaves
where candles bend to the wind,
in the blindwhiteness of surgery,
in the drunkard's eyes on the curbstone,
in the waxy white of breasts
under the lips of lover,
in the uncanny white of magnolias,
in the topaz light of eyes
beading the dark of forests,
in the light of the scientist's brain,
from light, lights, the light
streams forever the Shadow.

• • •

Heaven which art in Heaven Our Father in Heaven,
in our hunger, in our thirst, in our darkness, in our light,

in the riches of our poverty, in the poverty of riches,
in the leaf falling, in the sap rising, in our winter
and our spring, when the earthquake shakes the mountain,
when the calm is laid upon our shoulders, in the ashes
of our sorrow, in our peace and in our terror,
Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy name be hallowed
morning, noon and night,
in the quiet pulse of darkness,
in the harpstrings of the light,
in the wisdom of old women
in which tart is mixed with sweet,
in walkers walking early
on young feathered feet;

Hallowed be Thy name
in the folding of the hands,
in the plastic strength of patience
that long waiting lends,
in swift outgoings
to a distant country,
in slow returnings
to a rooted piety;

Thy name be hallowed
in the tall poise of the great,
in the comic solemnity
of the grasshopper's gait,
in the moment that trembles
a molecule of joy,
in the Grand Canyon hour
of soul's immensity;

Thy name be hallowed
in the working of our minds,
in the action of the Spirit,
in the building of our hands,
in the speaking of our tongues,
in the using of our shame
for the kneeling and the serving —
Hallowed be Thy name.

## *THY KINGDOM COME THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN*

Our hands plough the soil centuries waiting,
our hands drop the seed in the soil that is ready;
in Thy hands is left the shaping of the miracle,
in Thy hands the hope our hands cannot accomplish;
Thy Kingdom all light the hands of our haste
streak with darkness, our dream which Thy realness
alone can redeem from our impotence, Thy wisdom
when the sins of our sloth turn us to madness,
Thy season of suns and of rains when our inner
climate lures us to barren schemes by illusory
fires, Thy Kingdom a hard birth
to the womb that seeks signs and wonders,
Thy Kingdom an alien good to eyes
taken up with the glitter of lights on the fairway;
the wheel of Fortune whirls with a breathless
swiftness, the lucky number a magnet
to eyes bent on magic; with quicksilver fingers
the magician plunders our dreams, whips out
the striped candy canes of our childhood.
This is the sweet we have craved in the times
of our spareness when nothing adorned the green tree
but wreaths of carols, when stars too high
for our little stature to reach were the only
gifts we had to offer our children.
Now there are stars to touch, to wear
in our ragged hair, spangles all over
the trapeze waltzer fall on us, glint
on our broken shoes as they move on the cinders.
On the Merry-G-Round we doff our hearts
to Let's Pretend, then go home to a cold
hearth, our eyes still dazzled with rockets.

But in us there's something bred to a harder
way than the way of magic. Though we lie
in our beds and stiffen our hearts against it,
it wears down the taut length of our strength
with a stealthy insistence. In the swirling depths
of our minds, in the drowning depths of our darkness,

hear us lest we drown. Our Father
stretch out Thy hand. Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

• • •

Thy Kingdom
to search out phantoms
in the words of false prophets
its green hills holding
the faith of our feet
sometimes lured to follow
the tall and glittering cities
rising from the plain
and imaged in their many
identical faces
the static poise of the machine

Thy Kingdom
to save the salt of humour
against the hope of fencing
wayward human forces
unexpected freshets
and sudden moons in us
with a system of man-made
dykes tissue-frail

Thy Kingdom
to keep our hunger whole
till the lights go on in the theatre
till the speaker throws out his lariat
for the last time to sharpen
the instinct for ghosts in us
who are not yet born
as they peddle their singing
birds in crystal cages

Thy Kingdom
to guard in us what is real
the dream to live in Thy Kingdom
finished at last with shadows

## *GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD*

Give us this day our daily bread,
not transfigurations wrought by spirit's pride
till sight is hypnotized with flecks of light
that die at last in darkest dark,
the ego suddenly looking out
where the six tall arches once invited Thee.
Give us instead the bread and wine of Thy humility
that we would take as simply as the flowers take the light;
give us that wholeness of appetite
that craves the one good,
growing our minds on Thee.
Each alone in the great crowd
let us remove the running shoes
of intellectual pride,
throw down the divining rods
of ideologies and ceasing to think
through the handsome masks of logic
kneel and drink with naked lips of Thee.

## *AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US*

feeling the warped
shape of our sinning,
seeing our morning
litheness stripped
by the hungry vultures
of self-torture,
widowed by beauty
we thought our own,
deceived by lust
for our fair slight
righteousness,
thinking we grieve
for the wrong we have done,
we fashion a halo

of starry sorrow,
and enchant our souls
with a delicate tune,
music to blur
the recognition
of what we are
with what has been.
God is a spirit
and apprehended
only in spirit
and in truth,
no hypnosis
of self can find Him,
Narcissus shrivels
before His sight;
pain that makes
of the sinner a hero
is lost to the Hand
that bears up the meek,
there is no dress-up
in sack-cloth and ashes,
no celebration
with shrine and candles
but a merciless probing
of innermost self.

Repentance is neither
a bitter-sweet liquor
to indulge the spirit
or a penance done,
it fits like a death mask
the face of the actor,
eating like acid
into the bone,
and when the I
is sealed and delivered,
commands — Immediate
use of powers —
as though the illness
had not been.

There is no loitering
in the sunfilled garden,
no hoarding in secret
of the flaming wing,
but Love must practise
its own deliverance
and build with hands
a house not our own.

## *AS WE FORGIVE THEM*

Walking in pleasant places under milky skies,
arched over by the sense of our sweet green
soundness, we think like poets in images
(Forgiveness the hand stretched over cliffedge
with background the blue, and the trumpet-curved clouds)
we see ourselves in the hand and the godly gesture
but not in the face of the clinging, imperilled stranger —
our birth waits a cold and grudging spring,
for nothing is whole that has not been severed,
the April God rises from shattered limbs.
One who receives the blinding light for his healing
will flow with hands of light toward brothers in the dark,
for acknowledgment of sin breeds a high, austere
beauty, a daring to look on mountains that close in.
Humbly then is the gift given, no miracle
so lovely as when a man is being born.
It reaches above his will, stretches over
his weakness, the dream of New Jerusalem
flowers from his loins. Oh, God, teach us
that to forgive is not too much to ask of us,
that it is not Thy divine prerogative alone.
In the jungle entangling us, something stirs
that is clear in us, a need that can grow strong in us,
toward a wholeness that is human walking with Thee in the sun!

## *AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL*

And lead us not into temptation.
Make our will strong but not to breaking,
weave us into a close web, not mind

or flesh its own peculiar good seeking,
keep us from false pride that grows resisting
at the heart's core the warm and fruited summer,
give us the balanced grace of a tree or flower,
and when we ask for strength when weakness threatens,
hear us not if we mean the strength of iron,
give us instead the flexible will of rhythm,
of wind, water, the bird, the grass in motion,
give us endurance to know the light of Thy looking,
the shallowness of our love, the depth of our degradation.

And lead us not into temptation,
yet shelter us not from its path and our certain knowledge,
strong in the faith that in Thee we can slay all monsters,
inviting not yet avoiding not all dangers,
knowing that when Thy breath is warm on our shoulder,
then is the time to test our wholeness of dying;
let us go into our innermost wilderness,
bravely yet not with any presumptuous pride,
only accepting the tides that compel the spirit
when once the spirit is acknowledged real, its seasons
in Thy hands. This is the time to burn,
this is the time to suffer, caught between
the mirage of life with self the dancing centre
and the gaping gulph of death which no longer
promises the Stranger. What fantastic dream
was this, of some clear-eyed, warm-limbed creature
walking out of death to walk on hills with God?
And who and what is God in this self-dense
solitude? "Only a childish dream,"
whispers the childish mind. "What is this second
birth but a painful metamorphosis,
a moment of dragonfly brightness inviting
a darker death?" Our Father, in this hour,
give us the strength to remember what we no longer
know, and give us the strength to know, Father,
that the dancing self is the fable, that the real is only
found in the body of its death. In this hour
and every hour of all our days, Father,
hear our prayer, deliver us from evil.

*FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM*
*AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY*
*FOREVER AND EVER AMEN*

All things move in it,
the mountain that stands,
the seed that burgeons,
marked by Thy hand,
the voice of the waters,
the silence of the stone,
fruit in clusters,
the polished bone
that tides have finished,
declare Thy name.

All things passing
back of the eye,
clouds in procession
on an ever sky,
the ghost of the apple
shining through its skin,
sun in a ripple
on a bent piece of tin,
all look out
to Thy face looking in.

What is forever cannot be lost,
the Kingdom, the Power, the Glory, Thine, God of Hosts.

Though the ear is stopped to what it once heard,
the cymbals of passion around lovers' beds,
the dance band's brass heaven, the martinis in crowds
cannot quite kill the memory of the single small Voice.
In those who see and in those who are blind,
forever it moves and watches its chance;
in the hands that make, in the hands that break,
is gathered the Power that one day will strike
the temples hands build to all other gods,
and save like the stars all big and small lights
for children who wander alone in the night,

the dream of Thy beauty in their poor, fuddled heads.

What is forever cannot be lost;
pluck out the eye, Thy Kingdom stands,
give the body to the carrion crows,
Thy Power fashions the triumph of the rose;
deny Thy Glory, Thy Glory burns
in the place of tombs, in the narrowest room.
Come home, my soul, to God who waits,
listen to His word, look in His face.
In the ages of Thy wisdom let us hide our eyes,
in what has been forever let us become,
for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory. Amen.

# Post-war Writing in Norway

Ivar Holm

Some time ago a radio round table was conducted in Norway on the subject of Norwegian post-war literature. The programme was called: "Examination and Analysis of Ourselves". I think this title indicates some of the most important problems with which Norwegian post-war literature has been dealing.

There were five contributors to the programme. Perhaps the author who made the most valuable contribution was Sigurd Hoel. Born in 1890, he was well known before the last war as a novelist, critic and man of letters. He has been, and still is, I think, interested in psychoanalysis. He spent most of the war in Sweden, and while in exile wrote a series of essays which he later collected in a book called *Reflections in a Dark Age*. This book is valuable, not only for Norwegians but for other peoples as well. A couple of years later he published a novel, called *Encounter at the Milestone*, where he dealt in the form of fiction with the same problem which he had written about in his essays.

The problem is: *why* does a man become a nazi, a sadist? Is the explanation to be found in his past? Are we — who happened to choose the other path — partly responsible for his fate? Have *we* done things which later proved fatal for him?

The novel tells us about a man who is confronted with his own past during the war. I can't give an extract of the novel here; I can only tell you that it is a disturbing book. It is forcing us to examine ourselves. This may be quite unpleasant but it is good to be shaken out of one's own complacency.

A related problem — why some Norwegians, and not others, turned traitor to their country — is dealt with by many authors in post-war Norway. It was bound to be a vital problem for us. For one hundred and thirty-five years we had been living peacefully. Our political and economic development had moved slowly towards the social state. No one had interfered with us; the conflict with Sweden in 1905 was solved peacefully. We had, so to speak, been taught that war could never come

to Norway. Because of our special virtues we had to be rewarded with peace. We had got the feeling of — you know — it can't happen here!

Well, when things did happen and the German invasion came on the 9th of April, 1940, the shock was the greater. Very soon we had to realize that the German invader was the enemy, but then the next and still greater shock came. The enemy was amongst ourselves: our relatives, our neighbours, our friends, our friends' friends, proved to be the enemy. You know, there are not very many people in Norway: we live in small towns, in rural districts — we know each other. How was it possible?

Obviously the authors had to tackle this problem. They tried to analyze different cases of treachery. It had happened once. Perhaps they were able to find a way to prevent it happening again. Perhaps they could explain how it happened, and help other people, their readers, towards an understanding.

Some of our writers have dealt with this problem with considerable success, foremost among them Odd Bang Hansen, before the war a teacher in a secondary school and today one of our finest prose stylists. He is a master of suggestion; the reader has to use his own imagination, he himself has to carry the thought further.

Bang Hansen's first post-war novel is called *The Ring Round the Well*. This novel tells the story of a young nazi, hardly more than a boy, who has been liquidated by the underground militia. Then the author tells what different sorts of people say, how they feel when they hear the news about the liquidation: the boy's old teacher, his friends and so on. And the conclusion is that all of them are, in their own way, responsible for his development into a nazi.

In his next novel, *During This Night*, he touched on another problem which Goebbels succeeded in creating: anti-semitism. In Norway, too, we have got several spokesmen for this, the shame of our century.

A young novelist, Kaare Holt, has created quite a sensation with some of his post-war novels. The last one, *Cross-Road*, is by far the best one. He stresses the importance of the *choice*, the alternative, in certain moments of life. Now you will perhaps say: Aha, Sartre and his existentialism! But I am afraid it is not that simple. Kaare Holt, who was a worker before he took up writing, does not know Sartre at all. It is strange, you know, the same problems are touched on by different people in different places at the same time. It is a big distance between

Sartre's Parisian boulevard and Kaare Holt's rural Vestfold in Norway.

Tarjei Vesaas is among the novelists who have depicted the fear and uncertainty of our times most intensely. Vesaas, who writes in "new Norwegian", has developed a peculiar, tense style. In his post-war novels he displays a true mastery of symbolism. His first post-war novel, *The House in Darkness*, was actually written during the war, but it was obviously impossible to publish it until the war was over. This book is definitely the best novel written about Norway in war-time.

Vesaas tackles the problem of the moral quality in man. What would you do, he asks, if a critical and dangerous situation arose: have you sufficient moral and spiritual strength to hold to your own convictions? In two later novels he writes — from different angles — of fear, uncertainty and the closed human mind. This gentle artist is the man of wisdom among our present-day writers. He has a deep knowledge of the human mind.

During the first and second years after the war we were almost drowned in books dealing with Norway in war-time. They were books of fiction, poetry and plain reporting. A small number of them will be remembered — those which are honest and try to clarify the experiences of the war. Some have a great historical and psychological interest as well — for example, a few books dealing with life and death in concentration camps.

But many of them are written to tell the reader that the author was one of the greatest heroes who ever lived!

A large proportion of the collections of poetry published immediately after the war contained a rather naive patriotic poetry which declared that the poet was fond of Norway and loved democracy. Recently, however, a number of young poets, some of considerable talent, have begun to appear.

Arnulf Overland, the grand old man among Norwegian poets, remains active and vigorous in many fields. In lectures and newspaper articles he has plunged into every question of public interest, ranging from new forms of orthography to international politics. He is by now one of our most ardent critics of Soviet Russia and her satellites. In the 'twenties and 'thirties his attitude towards Russia was sympathetic, but the Moscow trials proved to be decisive for his stand (as for many other Norwegian intellectuals). Immediately after the war there was a strong feeling of sympathy for Russia among Norwegian intellectuals, but, well, certain things happened, among other things the putsch in Czechoslovakia in February, 1948. That was a final, decisive blow.

In the post-war years Overland has published some excellent war and post-war poems. His war poems, written in his typical classical style, and published by the clandestine press, were widely read. Eventually he was jailed because his work expressed anti-nazi sentiments. Later he was sent to Germany where he spent four years in concentration camps.

Another well-known poet, Herman Wildenevey, is still productive. Some people would call him the grand old man among our poets. He is — as he has always been — the happy singer who praises the beautiful Norwegian scenery. His favourite seasons are springtime and the sunny South-Norwegian summer. Over and over again he sings about happy young people who fall in love with one another. His poems are always distinguished by music and harmony. He has without doubt influenced many younger poets; however, his post-war poems have not added very much to his reputation.

If Wildeney has not changed, the years of war and of isolation have left their mark on the cultural life of post-war Norway as a whole. Norwegians have been struggling to find a new orientation.

Immediately after the war, some people tried to go back to 1939, as if the years of war had not existed. But they soon discovered that something had happened in the outside world; there were new things to be taken into consideration before they could start afresh. Many felt bewildered, confused and still feel like that. The world of quiet evolution had passed away, the solid ground upon which we had stood had given way. Our own small country was now definitely a part of a world in turmoil.

Let me try in a sentence or two to characterize *one* of the many trends in Norwegian culture today. Thinking of literature, of art and of education, I will say: You can find a loyalty, a faithful adherence to our own cultural traditions, but also a receptiveness to new ideas — ideas from other countries and other cultures which, as time goes on, will fructify our own culture.

I have said a good deal about uncertainty and fear as depicted in Norwegian literature today. There *is* without doubt a trend of pessimism, of fear, to be found. And here post-war Norway is linked up with pre-war Norway. Two years before the Germans invaded our country, Arnulf Overland wrote a mighty poem, "You must not sleep". The catastrophe of war was approaching: stop it while there is time, he implored. In agony, in desperation he cried out:

Save your child!
Europe is burning!

# ANNE WILKINSON

## Two Poems

### *POEM OF ANXIETY*

All morning I go walking in the jungle,
Loving and sweet with snakes, a wag
With winged malarial hosts,
With each insidious and daylight trap
I'm gay to tangle.

My whole and body being sings
In dapple of day jungle, laughs
To meet a death, unviolent, say
From an adder or a fretted insect's sting.

In acres spoked with noon
I ride the rim of danger, hoard
The pearl and swine of sweat
For one bright foe,
The striped, discerning tiger.

Though he stretches with the shadows
All the aftermath of the hay-high morning,
Yawning yet, nor turns
His golden menace from its lair,
The octave of his pads plays huge and soft
On my mouse timorous ear.

When night's at large in the jungle
I go fearful
Lest I kiss or claw his eye.
Too Whoo, Too Whit, who's who
When all the jungle reeks?

Exposed by five white columns of the moon
Our tracks bear witness, prove
The mating of our spoor.
Clear as criss-cross lies our love
On the forest floor.

## *THE UP AND DOWN OF IT*

As I came down
I met a man
Going up a narrow stair.
He wore a beard and hairy
Had the gall to swear
His name was God.
'Well met', I answered, modest,
Lowering my catholic
Appetite of eyes,
'Alone, without a witness
I'll confess: I'm Mrs. Bloom
The loitering Moon Goddess.'
He blushed, beard, gall and all
A heavenly red
And squeezed against the wall, afraid,
And I a simple witch
With only the silky power
To stroke the bat
That flaps the shutters in his belfry.
I mumboed a humble spell
I'd learned from men
On burning terms with hell
Then let God pass.
Ascending on the right
He reached his tower.
I, two steps at a time
Jumped my way to grass.

# ELIZABETH BREWSTER

## Two Poems

### *LONDON FOG*

Fog lies in the trees like pools of pale water,
Washing the new leaves, dripping on the sickly daffodils;
Fog wraps its damp and woolly scarf
Around the bent necks of the citizens,
Gets a stranglehold.
Fog is a smoke in the nostrils,
A grimy hand-print on the window.
Fog is a poison gas blurring out the pale faces of the children.
And among these children —
Condemned ghosts wandering in shades of underground —
And among these rickety and blurred tenements,
Among the dingy grocery shops where men in once-white aprons
wait on tired women standing in queues,
Among the butcher shops where limp rabbits hang in
unsightly death,
Among all these I wander,
Thinking of a blue, frosty sky above white snow
And of green pines standing
Frosted by stillness
In a clear blue light.

## *"Peace is what is found"*

Peace is what is found
When the sailor sets his will
To turn from a rough sea
To a rougher still.

Peace is a walking out
From a cold room
Into a colder blizzard
And drifted doom.

Peace is pain increased
Till it is numb,
And a cry so shrill
That it seems dumb.

Peace cannot be shaken
By death or strife,
For it has swallowed both
To make its life.

RALPH GUSTAFSON
Fiction Award, 1949-50, for *The Pigeon*
(In our issue for Oct.-Nov., 1949)

F. R. SCOTT
Poetry Award, 1949-50, for *Lakeshore*
(In our issue for Aug.-Sept., 1950)

*RALPH GUSTAFSON* is widely known as a Canadian writer and editor. Born near Sherbrooke, Quebec, in 1909, Mr. Gustafson, a professional writer, is at present living in New York. He is the author of *Epithalamium in Time of War* (1941), *Selected Poems* (1944), and other books of verse, and the editor of several collections of Canadian writing, including the widely-circulated *Penguin Anthology of Canadian Poetry*. His short stories have appeared in many Canadian and American magazines. *The Pigeon*, his prize-winning story, has since been re-printed in *The Best American Short Stories of 1950*, edited by Martha Foley and published by Houghton Mifflin, New York.

*F. R. SCOTT*, whose writing is also widely known, was born in Quebec city in 1899. His name is associated with two little magazines which have made a contribution to the development of modern writing in Canada — the *McGill Fortnightly Review* (1926-27) and *Preview* (1942-45). Among his writings are *Canada Today*, a study of Canadian economic and social problems, and *Overture*, a book of poems. Several years ago a group of his poems was awarded the Guarantors' Prize offered by *Poetry* (Chicago). Professor Scott lives in Montreal, where he is a member of the law faculty of McGill University.

# ELIZABETH KAIJA

## *SONG OF A BUTTERMAKER*

Pat that yellow stuff.
Mrs Ben Abdul in the next tent
Knows nothing of buttermaking.
It's so soft and yellow,
Push it around some more.
Have you heard ?
They wouldn't buy Mrs Tsi Lun's
Butter at the marketplace yesterday.
The milk must all be squeezed out,
Pat, push and squeeze that yellow stuff.
Mrs Crito always buys her butter,
From the peasant woman of Marathon,
And Portia gets hers along the Appian way.
It's coming now, it's beginning to look like it should.
A few more pats with a sure firm hand.
Mrs Van Dorn is the best housewife on the canal.
Her butter is always firm and clean and yellow.
Now pile it all up into a yellow mound.
Look at it! so sweet and firm.
Much better than Mrs Smith's next door.

# Music

Chester Duncan

## *WHAT IS MUSIC ?*

*WHAT IS MUSIC ?* This is a question big with foolish answers. And yet, our vigilant pride, in advising rigid silence at such moments, makes us no wiser. And even if we compromise slickly with "There are all kinds of music, all good; each is appreciated by its supporters," that is not much. Perhaps we should pursue this idea imprudently to its ultimate, imagining as best we can these strangely different worlds of musical appreciation. There are so many of them ! — the 18th century sonata, swing, song, 16th century polyphony, the nocturne, Wagner, the cowboy song, Liszt, Beethoven's posthumous quartets, opera, the ballad, "The Blind Ploughman," "O Promise Me." To place them all on a ladder, a hierarchy, makes teachers of us all, masters of a plan which only outshouts our uneasiness. But all through the list (before it is tidied) we get the unique, stirring effect, sometimes happening as a result of the listener's education, but sometimes almost in spite of it. Always at the back of "taste" we have what each one wants and what each one gets, a direct contact, followed by frenzied clapping and cheers, a silent look, a serene and settled time as he smokes into the night, a rhythmic and ecstatic jam.

*WHAT IS MUSIC ?* "I find music too exciting, too disturbing," says the lover of poetry, the settled, crystal word. "I had lunch with Tom Eliot a few days ago at his club," says Stephen Spender in his *September Journal* (1940). "We both agreed on Bach and Gluck for the war." "Music is an escape, the best ever," says another, "better than drink or wit or sleep." The mystic says, "Music can — better than any other art — point to those realms where silence reigns, where peace falls, where there is no time or movement." "Rhythm ! Beat ! Right out of this world !" say the young. "Bartok is the greatest of the moderns," says the student. And the lover sighs, "Do you remember our song?" This from one pious listener: "Music is the voice of God." This from another: "Music can undermine; it is soft and debilitating."

*WHAT IS MUSIC ?* Dodging once again, we fall into the inarticulate pool of musical experience, where language is an awkward stranger, doing the best he can.

*Mozart Sonata*

A child of sophisticated innocence, he gathers the wandering strands, the wisps of tune, into a globed, ivory perfection. His faithful subjects are pink-cheeked or aristocratically pale, pathetic in their determined little strengths, their assumed melancholy, their party joy, their heroic little gestures and passes.

Now we begin in chubby health, so easy, wise, and serious, like a child enrapt, arranging the beautiful blocks, instigating a symmetrical charge by the glorious lead cavalrymen, or a silver procession of prize-winners and officials in polished and confident progress, a shining phalanx. Then an intriguing little struggle between soft and hard, and a temporary truce, concluded with appropriate bows, grace, and gallantry. The stage is cleared and we succumb to the musing quietness of deft melancholy, prolonged in precious tenderness with a dimple and a smirk. Again and again, in different ways, he can say the same, perpetual, delightful thing. In his next act, dancers in miniature clarity mince to a minuet, then rush to a rondo, scramble to the cadence, pause, unruffled, announce the end and fly.

*Entertainer*

Received at banquets and broken by clubs, sung in the heart and heard along the hall, a group called "selected": "There's a Brown Bird Singing" and "The Blind Ploughman". Or, marching tears and rollicking breasts, the artificial jollity of the smiling acrobat or accordianist, the bogus sob of the voiced complainer, the no-good baritone and the incredible soprano, both lusting for the fabulous penultimate note to knock 'em in the teeth, throw 'em in the aisles, please the rotary Kiwanis.

But the blood did course and the tears started to come when the fat man thought so seriously of the dear dead days at home, of the lone prairie and the coyotes, of him in bed and mother downstairs playing her own accompaniments. He didn't know much about music but he knew what he wanted. The boys and tobacco and leisure and drink and hunting and the old songs and the lake and auld lang syne.

*Romantic*

The romantic appeals, repeatedly asking, imploring in wonderful circumstances, with the droop of willows and the choked cry of one hand after the other. The serious, low seriousness, graciously sinking in the middle, treating itself to a little sad smile, even a gentle jig or two, and then back to the long endearing preparation for the cosmic cadence,

adorned by jewels, suspensions, delays, and assisted at the sense organs by that ham actor *tempo rubato.*

His gramaphone was playing Tschaikowsky. He had inherited care and good looks in the best possible proportion. He had also a tearful, attractive sickness. *La princesse lointaine* but immediate. The wound itching and hurting and pleasing, the infinitely tender gesture of weakness and of love. The waves of want increase in scope and texture, enriching themselves until, sparkling in Goodness and Surrender, a mountainous flood bursts over him in an apotheosis of agonized light.

Does giving save ? Does Wagner redeem ? We too sit with faces turned to the sound of gentle pain, lined but gleaming, prepared to wait in silence as the record is turned or the page, cigarette pin-pointing the darkness, in softness and in dream, in smokefall with exquisite Chopin. Strange calls are answered, blue strangers bow gravely, longings are no longer lonely.

*Dance Hall*

O I shrieked and clasped my hands in ecstasy down at the dance-hall on Saturday Night, with Herbie and the sweet boys, the sweet and swing boys, who, by various leering devices, sometimes conscious, sometimes jam, induced a baroque, rhythmic, coiling state of sublimation. I yelled and cheered and whistled and swung as the inviting trombone, the indecent clarinet, the endearing trumpet, the hysterical piano rushed together in tingling disorder. We sway and dip and close and hug, burst apart like opened flowers, twirl in heat and speed, tap and run, separate, rush together, find each other, lift our faces and cry. The long unbearable crescendo of the top C in the trumpet begins far away from the confusing foreground of guitars, sexaphones and blood-pulsing percussion. The piano-player has no music; God tells him what to do. The crescendo advances, up several tones, widens, scissors through the rug-cutting devout, gathers up several parts of the Dionysian band in its march, appears, glares at the uplifted, treading assembly, blows itself to an unbelievable roundness and fullness, turns and wriggles, bursts into silence. The crowd is still.

We sink to a Blues, borne on the dim-lit floor, slither to an offbeat, pause to the long floating phrase wound by Electra at the mike. The night and you in a deep purple elegy of aching delight. The men in the band smile sadly and sympathetically at the ritualists weaving before them. They know how it is, how it has been, how it can be with two, how it can be with a band that moves as five fingers, that speaks in the momentous,

automaton cry. Refreshed and tired, purged and purified, we move to the door right out of this world, caught in the net of lament and triumph, pain and pleasure, the rhythm of the universe, the tempo of the blood. Served by sadists, eaten by masochists: One Beautiful Alas.

*Glitter*

The awkward little group was answering questions in music. It was Studio Club Day. Each one had stumbled, pushed, scrambled, bitten, sailed, bluffed, or spelled through his piece. The strain was over; they were having a musical game, a quiz. The next question: Why are you studying piano ? Answers: Because I'm made to; Because I love Beauty; Because it will help me make a living. And then she said, "Because I want to be able to play *fast !*"

"In the series next winter, ladies and gentlemen, you will hear the fastest pianists in the world." Razzle-daze and spark, race track fortitude, with its wild integrity, crazy humour, and transcendental skill. The Minute Waltz in fifty seconds flat, the Spitfire-Typhoon Sonata, with wrists like steel, mind a-glitter, body unyielding. Record-shattering applause greets the speed-demon, the trained athlete blazing his way down the Steinway to the old one-two cadence, quivering in tremulo, exhaustion, and triumph. Certainly achieving — as we exchange delighted smiles — certainly succeeding in its own ruddy beauty. What fingers, arms, lips, tongueing, trilling, thrilling !

*Atmosphere*

Rest after action — another day, another song. In the twilight, perfect discords — rich, falling on the near-dark silence like single stones on hidden pools. In rooms transposed to stillness, we read, in our best, incredibly good voice, any poem, anything. Music bears it like a chalice. The soft, liquid eyes, like the gloaming, change what they look upon, focus a static sheen, there. *Vision fugitive*, sad, immediate ! Silver chords.

• • •

These are a few musical experiences; there are many more. How are they to be connected ? Certainly not by dogmatism, casuistry, and patronizing arrangement ("What you need, you know, is a course in music appreciation, some theory lessons, a few lectures on the Inner Meaning of the Great Masters"). What do they all mean ? I have no idea. What is our worst critical temptation ? To pretend they are not there.

# Film

Belle Pomer

## *TREASURE ISLAND — SUNSET BOULEVARD*

The film, no more than the novel, can be judged by a single set of standards. There are always the basic techniques to be appraised: in the novel, the craft of writing; and in the film, in addition, the acting, direction, and photography. Beyond these, intention as well as achievement must be considered. Within her limits, Jane Austen is perfect; we do not complain because her novels lack the emotional intensity of *Wuthering Heights*, or the breadth and sweep of *War and Peace*. Similarly, we do not find fault with the film *Treasure Island*, which has accomplished its aim of spinning a good yarn, because it lacks significant implication. It is, in fact, a better picture than *Sunset Boulevard*, which is intended to be a human document, but falls far short of the mark. It is possible, of course, to have a magnificent failure, or a success beyond conscious intention, but these occur more often in literature than on the screen.

Taken alone, the film *Treasure Island* is a successful tale of adventure. The interest and excitement immediately aroused are well sustained throughout. The acting, except for Bobby Driscoll's mechanical performance as Jim Hawkins, is good: the pirates are really pirates, unwashed, hard-featured, and ferocious; and Robert Newton's splendid portrayal of Long John Silver delights from beginning to end. Excellent use of colour, costumes, and settings plays a large part in bringing to life the days of the skull and crossbones. The fine scenic effects on the island itself have been used with unusual restraint; they are seen for an instant, in the course of the action, but not lingered on for themselves alone.

When we look to the parent novel, however, and see the legacy that was offered, we find that the offspring has not done it justice. I have no quarrel with the paring and tightening of the introduction; for the film to make visual all the background that Stevenson includes in the opening chapters of his narrative would result in too rambling and disunified a beginning. But the last half of the book, in which the delicate balance of power is shifted back and forth between the mutineers and Jim Hawkins' party with steadily increasing tension, has been simplified

almost to movie formula.

Even more disappointing are the changes in characterization. Jim Hawkins, in the novel, is not just a boy of courage; he has the temper of the adventurer, the streak of daring which leads him to take unnecessary risks. Nor is Doctor Livesay really the mild-mannered ship's doctor of the film; in the novel, his blunt speeches can make even a pirate hold his tongue. But it is Long John Silver, though he dominates the film as he did the book, whose proportions have been most painfully diminished. In the novel, he is a markedly superior person, shrewd, intelligent, self-disciplined, and of tremendous strength and courage. But for all that, he is depraved, utterly without heart. When we close the book, we know that, had it served his advantage, he would have cut down all the good and honest men, and Jim Hawkins too, without misgivings. His claim to our sympathy is kin to that of the great villains of literature: admiration for his abilities, and pity for their waste. In the movies, however, no one so morally degraded is permitted nobility; nor are we allowed sympathy for a heart without a flicker of humanity. Therefore Long John Silver is presented as more cunning than his thick-skulled, brawling crew, but not greater in stature; and his villainy is redeemed by his attachment for young Jim.

In order to enjoy *Treasure Island*, you must treat it as an orphan. Do not re-investigate its parentage until after you have seen the film.

There is no doubt that the producers of *Sunset Boulevard* meant it as high tragedy. It is all the more unfortunate, therefore, that within the first five minutes, the film's stature is reduced to eccentricity, and its audience to wary discomfort by the realization that the film is a flashback narrated by a corpse. In this case, the tired device of the flashback had nothing to offer; and much of the narration served the purpose of telling the audience what its reaction should be, in case the movie had otherwise failed to create its effect. Now and again, for the sake of variety, the pointing finger was substituted for narrative — nothing was left to the hazard of subtlety.

*Sunset Boulevard* tells the story of Norma Desmond, a great star of the silent motion pictures, who is unable to face the facts that she is growing older, that her career is behind her, and that she is no longer the centre of an adoring universe. Immensely rich, she lives almost isolated from the world in a grotesque fantasy of self-love. Into her life there stumbles Joe Gillis, a young and penniless Hollywood writer, fleeing his creditors. Not too much troubled with scruples, Joe wangles the job of revising Miss Desmond's impossible screen version of Salomé, which

she dreams of as her next great role. Soon he has become more deeply involved, and realizes at last that his employer is in love with him. But Joe regrets the price he has paid for a full stomach and fine clothes, an elaborate roof over his head, and the inevitable gold cigarette case; he frets over his own neglected writing career, and the loss of carefree, youthful love. His attempts to eat his cake and have it too, result in Norma Desmond's jealous interference. She shoots him when at last he tries to leave her, and, catapulted into total madness, mistakes the police and news photographers when they arrive, for the personnel of a stage set, where she is about to begin a new picture.

The major weakness of the film is its inconsistent and uncertain attitude to the theme and the characters. At one moment, Norma Desmond is a tragic figure on the heroic scale, larger than life; in the next, she is reduced to absurdity. For a time, Joe Gillis is presented as a well-meaning young man, who has become involved in this situation through a series of accidents beyond his control; then we are made conscious of all the warning signals he had been given, while he could still easily have extricated himself. And in express opposition to his words that it is no tragedy to be fifty provided that one doesn't try to remain twenty-five, the whole film seems to cry out, "How horrible to be fifty ! What a tragedy to grow old ! " This shifting from one standpoint to another is quite a different matter from setting the point of view at an omniscient height from which all sides of the situation are seen.

In spite of the incongruities, the clichés, the lapses into sensationalism, *Sunset Boulevard* nevertheless exerts a spell over its audience. For one thing, it seems perpetually on the verge of crystallizing into something significant. For another, it offers the opportunity to compare a legendary figure with the talents of to-day. But the real fascination of the film is the spirit it breathes of Gloria Swanson's flamboyant, romantic era, when the film stories were as strange and exotic, as far removed from reality, as is Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard.*

# J. K. HEATH

## Two Poems

### *THE SEASON*

The green born moment of the spring
Defines itself as flowered summer;
Embryonic buds proliferate,
Explicate, as sun falls plumber.

Limpleather leaves expostulate
Air's unprecipitated thunder;
Crab-catching sun prepares retreat,
Eyeing the southern Goat for plunder.

Equinox calls in battered coinage
For death plaques stamped in bronze and gold,
And peeled skulls of the senile poppies
Donate their recent flesh to mould.

The interstellar space convects
The vitalic heat of winter earth,
And its mob of gimlet stars screw down
The carcass in its coffin berth.

## *WIFE*

Crossing the valley broken up with rocks,
Warmed by the casual sun,
Bedding in rock rifts weltered up with leaves
And reading cloven moons for clocks,
The caveman heart slept frosty in the nights,
Enduring the sharp stars and the naked lights
Come early into the gray sky.
Wrapped in its tiger's hide
It drank at the salty pools and saw
The stolid rocks look blank from the pool's eye.

Now heart hearths with heart
In the honey celled hollow of rock,
And the fire struck from the bony flint
Holds shadows apart.
Orion pursues his bright sidereal chase
Outside, in the dark heavens wheeling by,
But the hunt of the universe passes over
The niche where we harbour from rolling sky.

# GEORGE JOHNSTON

## Three Poems

### *THE BIG WOMAN*

Mistress of all her corners, undulant,
Happy as a hot snake in the sun,
She is my queen, enormous, elegant;
She is my bright noon, my refulgent one.

How, in her shadow, motions come and go !
Nothing to startle, nothing behind the door;
Sunlight by inches measuring the flow
Of imperturbable hours . . . A bang of thunder

Reminds me of my passion. O my head !
And when she puts her heart upon the chair
It is as though the last word has been said
And all remains to do. Why do they stare,

Faces that follow me along the wall
Representing all eyes that ever were,
All mouths that ever have been nourished, all
Ears that have opened in the enfolding air ?

### *PASTORALE*

The grasshopper does not so free
The easy summer time dispense
As Mr. Jacob, in a tree,
Playing upon wind instruments;

He fills the air with ornaments,
Trilling and running, gracefully,
Oblivious of audience
And, in his improvising, free;

The snake, the frog, the bumblebee
And other forest residents
Hark to his music, gratefully,
Soothed to a charming diffidence.

## *REMEMBER BLEEKER STREET*

Amy, so painted and so pure,
So petal-smooth, so far away,
Will you remember me or not
When you are in the memory way ?

Will you remember Bleeker Street
Whereon we roller-skated ? O
The shouts, the voices in the trees,
The boys in blazers, long ago !

We were so young, the world so old,
The leaves so brilliant in decay,
The band so happy in the park
On Saturday and Labour Day.

A thump of brass, a cheer or two,
A little beating on a drum,
Will bring me to the edge of tears
Closer than I often come.

The yellow lights of Bleeker Street
Shine on the roving boys no more;
Their whistlings thread the dropping leaves
And blow away. Ah, closing door !

A man picks at his trouser cuffs,
Feels in his joints the stiffening stone,
Makes his good-byes, recalls his past,
Frets with his food and sleeps alone.

Will you remember me for sure
Amy, so memorable, so vain ?
We are as old as empty lots,
But the world's growing young again.

# The Picnic

## Desmond Pacey

I started the car and began to back out of the driveway. As usual, I had to tell the kids to sit down in the back seat so that I could see if there was anything coming. As it was, I just stopped in time to miss a delivery truck which was speeding up the street.

Within five minutes we were out of the city and scudding along the river road. What a day for our first picnic of the season, for our very first picnic since moving to this new district! The sky was a soft blue dotted here and there with wispy white clouds like puffs of floating smoke; the surface of the river was just barely disturbed by a faint spring breeze; the trees on either side of the highway gently ruffled their new leaves like pigeons preening their feathers in the sun.

"Is everybody happy?" I called out.

"We are!" came the answering duet from the kids behind me.

"What about mummy?" In sheer exuberance I patted Edith's knee beside me.

"Fine and dandy!" she said, but she pushed my hand away. "Don't be taking chances," she went on. "You don't know this road, and it seems to twist and turn a lot."

There was something in what she said. The road did wind a good deal, as it followed the bends of the river, and there were frequent hills and blind turns. The pavement, after the winter frosts, was in pretty bad shape — full of pot-holes and frost-bumps which were apt to throw you into the ditch if you weren't careful.

I'd been doing close to fifty-five since getting past the city limits, but I slowed down in response to my wife's warning and began to take in the scenery again. The road on this side of the river was on a high level, and you got a grand view right across the valley to the rolling wooded hills on the horizon. The land across the river was dotted with white and yellow farm houses and their huddled grey barns; here and there you could see farmers on tractors or behind teams of horses rhythmically moving back and forth across the fields as they did the spring seeding.

But I was feeling too gay to drive slowly for long. The speedom-

eter crept up to forty-five, fifty, fifty-five, and was just crowding sixty when we hit the worst pot-hole yet. I thought for a moment that I'd lost control of the car; we were within an ace of hitting the near ditch; but I managed to cling to the steering wheel and swing it hard round to the left. As I did so, I suddenly became aware of a kid on a bicycle on that side. I missed him all right, but it was a close shave that left me sweating all over.

"Golly, daddy," said Jimmy, "that was a close one!"

"I told you to be careful," said Edith. "You almost spoiled the first picnic right there!"

Well, I settled down after that and coasted along at about thirty-five. After about half an hour of steady driving we began to look out for a place to picnic. We saw several possibilities, but when we stopped to examine them there was always something missing. Finally we saw just the right spot. There was a high point of land jutting into the river; on this point were two quite large buildings, one white and new looking, the other old and grey; and on this side of them there was a nice open space which would be just right for a game of ball, and a patch of pebbly beach which would be ideal for the fire and the kids' boats.

I turned in the driveway beside the buildings and parked close to the water.

The kids pulled off their socks and shoes and were paddling in the water and pulling their boats around in no time. After I'd gathered driftwood for the fire I sat down on the rug beside Edith and watched the kids playing.

We looked out across the water, which was flowing slowly and silently southward, and on me at least it had its usual soothing effect. I forgot all about the near-crash with the car and settled down into one of those rare moods in which body and mind and the whole world seem to be functioning in perfect harmony. The breeze had increased slightly, and now blew in occasional gusts which turned up white patches of foam like the flash of birds' wings. But the gusts were warm and fragrant with spring, and did not disturb but only emphasised the peaceful, rhythmic beauty of the day.

"I wonder what those buildings behind us are?" asked Edith.

I looked back at them. The nearer one, white and new, might have been one of the new Regional High Schools which were springing up all over the province, though if so it was unusually small. But why the old grey building? It was too large for a teacher's or janitor's house, and it didn't look like an old school, with its many small windows. It looked more like an old farm house, but there were no barns or

outbuildings to go with it.

"I don't know," I said. "They might be schools, but it hardly seems likely."

"That's probably it," said Edith. "That would explain why they're so quiet. Saturday, school's out and the teacher's in town shopping."

I shrugged my shoulders and turned again to the playing kids, the flowing river, and the rolling hills beyond. But my mood had been broken. I couldn't get these buildings off my mind. I kept gnawing away, trying to figure them out. Maybe the white one was a community hall or center of some kind — but again, why the old grey building so close by ?

"Shucks," I said. "It's beyond me ! Let's eat !"

I lit the fire and put the kettle on while Edith got the hamburg and the rolls and the other food out of the hamper. As usual, the food tasted twice as good outdoors, and in the joy of eating and watching the kids eat far more than the normal amount I forgot all about the puzzling buildings.

After we had cleared up, I suggested a game of ball before starting for home.

Jimmy took charge as usual on such occasions. "O.K., dad. I'll pitch. Mummy, you're catcher. Susan, out in the field. Daddy, you're at bat. And don't hit it too far now."

We took our places. Jimmy wound up in real big league fashion, but the pitch was too high for me to reach even with the bat above my head. Edith recovered the ball from the edge of the water and Jimmy wound up again. This time the ball rolled along the ground and went through the catcher's legs — much to the delight of the pitcher and outfielder. The third pitch, however, was just right, and I caught the ball squarely. It sailed into the air, landed on the grass near the grey building, and rolled right to the wall.

Susan and Jimmy both ran after it, but apparently neither of them had seen just where it went and they were searching around helplessly. I went over to pick it up for them.

"There it is, "I said, pointing it out by the wall. The kids made a dive for it.

At that moment I became aware of a movement in the window above them, and noticed for the first time that the window was crossed by iron bars. Then the window was pushed up, and a man's face appeared whitely against the bars.

"Hello !" he said.

"How do you do ?" I stammered foolishly, while the kids stared

up at him with wide curious eyes.

"Your kids ?" he said.

I nodded.

"Like a stick of gum ?" He fumbled with a package in his hands.

"Sure !" came the duet, and hands reached eagerly up towards the bars.

He looked at me. "Is it O.K. ?"

I nodded again, though I knew Edith would disapprove. She hated them to have gum, for it always ended up in their hair or on their clothes.

He held two sticks of gum out through the bars, and I handed them down to the kids. I touched his fingers as I took the gum, and they were cold and clammy. I couldn't help a slight shudder of revulsion, but the kids hastily unwrapped the gum and started chewing it with obvious satisfaction.

"A nice pair of kids," he said.

I could sense Edith's impatience far behind me on the beach, but the man obviously wanted to talk. I couldn't think of anything to say and looked nervously around for a warden or some other official, but apart from the one window there was no sign of life anywhere.

I half turned towards Edith and the river. "You get a lovely view from here." I said awkwardly.

"Yes," he said. "But it gets tiresome after a while." A slight smile for the first time shifted the corners of his mouth.

"Been here long ?" I said. Maybe he was the warden himself. Maybe he had just been cleaning up the cell or something.

"Since last November," he said. "Waiting for trial. Just missed one session of the court, so I have to wait for the next. Should be along any day now."

Well, that settled one problem. He was no warden. There was another question I very much wanted to ask, but conscious of the eagerly listening children I repressed it in favour of a third.

'What's that classy white building in front ?"

"That's the Court House. That's where the trial will be."

"John, what are you doing ?" It was Edith, calling from the beach. She was starting towards us. I should have to go. I blurted out the real question in spite of the children.

"What are you in for ?"

"I killed a man."

The children moved still closer to the window — or was it that I involuntarily had stepped back ?

"Killed ?" I said. "How ?"

Thank Heaven Edith wasn't close enough yet to hear me ! What a question to ask in front of the children !

"Ran him down with a truck." He leaned forward confidentially until his forehead touched the bars. "I had the boss's truck out for the evening, see ? He didn't know, and I wasn't supposed to drive it — but you know how it is. There was this dame I kind of liked down the road here a ways, and I drove down to see her with a few quarts of beer. We had a nice time, a few drinks — not many, but enough to make us feel good. Around eleven, I started home, and found the lights on the truck wouldn't work. Up the road here a piece, I felt a bit of a bump. I was going kindov fast, and didn't pay much attention. I thought likely it had been a dog or something, maybe even a mailbox. Anyway I didn't stop. Next morning the police were around before I was up. They'd picked this old guy up by the side of the road. There was blood and hair on the rear vision mirror of the truck, so what could I say ?"

He stared at me from his tired grey eyes as if he hoped I could provide an answer. I could only stare back, shifting uneasily from foot to foot. I knew Edith must be near, and I was anxious to be gone.

"The trial will be on within a week or two," he went on, as if anxious not to lose me." You watch for it in the papers. They'll find me guilty, all right, and then it'll be Colchester for a stretch."

He would have gone on, but I could hear Edith's footsteps just behind me, so I broke away from him. "Best of luck," I said lamely. "And I'll sure watch for it in the papers !"

"That's right," he called after us. "You watch for it. And be good kids, now, you two."

The kids were all for lingering, but I pulled them along beside me. I could feel the pull of his eyes on my back too.

I tried to keep it from Edith, but of course she got the whole story out of me. She was furious. "Fancy standing there all this time talking to a man like that ! The children, too. Why, he's nothing but a common murderer !"

"Manslaughter . . . " I protested, but she wouldn't listen. She made the kids spit out the gum at once.

I had been so engrossed in the man and his story that I hadn't noticed the way the weather was changing. The breeze had quickened to a wind that whipped the water till it threw out a pus-like foam, and the smoke-like clouds had thickened and darkened so that they now completely blocked out the sun.

As we drove out on to the highway, a spatter of rain began to beat on the windshield. Soon it was falling heavily. Edith sat glumly beside me. I knew she was disgusted with me, but that would soon wear off. It wasn't that was bothering me, nor even the rain.

I drove slowly and carefully. How easy it would be ! In the dark, perhaps a wet night like this, driving an old truck without lights and probably with poor brakes, thinking of the woman and careless from the beer. And then the sudden bump. There would be that long, long moment while he wondered "What was that ? I hit something. A dog ? A skunk ? Maybe it was . . . " But by that time he would be a quarter of a mile up the road, nowhere to turn around, the rain and the darkness behind and a warm bed waiting at home, and naturally, what with the beer and all, you hoped for the best and you — or he, who was it driving the truck now, you or he ? — didn't stop though deep down you knew you should have, that you would deserve everything that was coming to you if it came.

I looked across at Edith. Was she still disgusted, or was she too, now that her irritation had worn off, thinking about the man in the cell, and the nightmare of the trial after all these months of solitary fretting, and the prospect of years in Colchester, staring out across the marshes to the sea ?

In the back seat the children were laughing and singing.

"Why don't you sing, dad ? Boy, didn't we have fun today ? Wait till I tell the kids at school !"

"Daddy," said Susan. "You know what I think ? I think that was the best picnic yet !"

She whispered in my ear and secretly showed me something clasped in her hand. It was the green wrapper from the stick of gum.

# BOOKS

*THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES*, 1950, edited by Martha Foley. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 452 pp. $3.75.

It may be a defect of the academic mind, but I found Martha Foley's foreword to this volume the most interesting part of it. In this foreword, to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the launching of the annual series by the late Edward O'Brien, she indulges in some reminiscences about the early volumes and also, in an "informal addendum", discloses the methods by which she herself selects the stories for inclusion.

When O'Brien launched the series, it was necessary for him to defend American fiction against its alleged "absence of all literary qualities". Today, as Miss Foley points out, no such defence is necessary, and "American novels and short stories are translated for publication in every country of the world." Indeed, though this Miss Foley does not mention, it may well be asked whether the pendulum has not swung too far, whether American fiction in general, and American short stories in particular, do not enjoy a vogue beyond their deserts. This is a point to which I shall return in discussing the stories in this book.

Among the contributors to the first volume of the series (1915) Miss Foley recalls, were Struthers Burt, Donn Byrne, Will Levington Comfort, Ben Hecht, Fannie Hurst (whose "genuine literary art" O'Brien was proud to affirm), Wilbur Daniel Steele, and a number of writers such as Thomas Gregg and Arthur Johnson who have never been heard of since. In other words, with the possible exception of Steele, all the contributors either gave up writing or succumbed to the lure of the slicks and the movies. How many of the earnest young writers represented in the current volume will meet a similar fate? Obviously it will require almost superhuman tenacity on their part to resist the pressures in American civilisation which impell them towards popular success at the sacrifice of artistic integrity.

But if they have this against them, the young American writers have much in their favour. They have, above all, a multiplicity of outlets for their work. Glancing at the long list of American and Canadian magazines which publish short stories and whose addresses Miss Foley conveniently places at the back of her anthology, the Canadian reader is at once struck by the scarcity of Canadian addresses and the even greater

scarcity of magazines in this country which are ready to welcome serious fiction. There are, indeed, only three: *Queen's Quarterly, Canadian Forum,* and *Northern Review.* Between them, these three can publish less than twenty stories a year and only one of them pays even a nominal sum to the author. No wonder that good Canadian short stories are scarce and that it is rare for more than one Canadian to appear in this annual anthology!

But the Americans, with over a hundred magazines to choose from, certainly cultivate the short story form assiduously. Their annual output of good, competent stories far exceeds the output of any other English-speaking nation and probably of any other nation in the world. In quantity, and even in average quality, America undoubtedly enjoys the leading position which Miss Foley claims for her. And yet, in reading the stories in this book, one is compelled to wonder whether the American short story has not fallen into a slump. The stories are clever, competent, and often moving, but there is a sameness about them, a formula quality which is different from the formulae of the pulps and slicks but as inhibiting in its way. Stories of children, which may aim at tragedy but seldom achieve more than a gentle pathos; stories of racial prejudice, which seems to be about the only sociological issue the American writer feels safe or sure enough to write about today; stories of writers and artists baffled or overcome by the materialistic environment in which they are compelled to live: these are the groups into which almost all the stories fall. There is no one outstanding writer for whom one feels safe in predicting a great future, no one to rival Maupassant or Chekov or even the early Hemingway or Anderson. Two or three writers seem to me, however, to be above the average: Sanora Babb, whose story of loneliness on the prairie has a quaint charm and deliberate naivete; Leslie Fiedler, whose story of the liaison between a young radical and his middle-aged schoolteacher sticks in the memory despite its curious involutions of form and style; and Edward Newhouse, whose story of the re-burial of an American lieutenant has something of the astringent irony of the early Dos Passos.

Canada this year is represented by Ralph Gustafson's story "The Pigeon", which first appeared in this magazine. It is a good story, one of the best ten in the book, in which Gustafson exploits again what seems to be his favourite theme in fiction: the tensions which arise between members of a family. Of the distinctive short stories published during the year, which Miss Foley lists at the end of her anthology, it is noticeable that all four Canadian stories mentioned appeared in *Northern Review.*

DESMOND PACEY.

*THE RENAISSANCE* by G. C. Sellery — Burns & MacEachern, Toronto, $4.75, pp. 296.

Historians, for convenience of discussion, attach labels to ages and movements. In the course of discussion, they commonly fall into the habit of talking, and sometimes thinking, as if these labels represented things as sharply defined, as effectively substantial as, say, a cow. Then after a while another historian arises to disabuse his colleagues of errors which the ordinary uninstructed man, if left to himself, would hardly be likely to make. Something of this sort has been happening in the last century with the history of the Renaissance, as Mr. Sellery points out in brief summary in his first chapter. He then goes on to state his own view, which, in equally summary fashion may be described as the view that nothing caused the Renaissance; it just happened, if indeed it even happened, for to a large extent it was there all along. There is nothing very novel in this interpretation, and it can be made as plausible as any other, depending on how one defines one's terms, and what factors in the evidence one chooses to emphasize.

Ten chapters are given to various aspects of Renaissance culture, with foot-note references; there is a bibliography of 201 references, arranged in alphabetical order of authors, and an index of some thirteen pages, mainly of proper names. The exposition is orderly, and occasionally repetitious; there is an abundance of rather obvious, and on the whole, uninteresting detail, a lack of novel and vivifying detail. The attempt to cover a great deal of ground in few words imposes an effort of selection that has not here been fully carried out; a considerable amount of fact has been included that might be relevant to a general history of the Renaissance, but merely encumbers the author's exposition of his theme without greatly enlivening it.

In short, the book is a stock type of academic composition; it is a series of lectures in a general survey course on the culture of the Renaissance, full of material on which one could easily take notes for use in a final examination. The general reader, if this is what he wants, will find it a compact way of expanding his knowledge of that kind of facts about the Renaissance.

L. A. M.

*ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES*, by Ernest Hemingway. S. J. Reginald Saunders, Toronto. $3.75.

The plot of Hemingway's latest novel, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, is characteristically uncomplicated. Colonel Richard Cantwell,

battle-scarred veteran of the two Great Wars, fifty-odd, soon to die of heart disease, spends the last days of his life re-visiting the Venetian countryside which he loves, slaughtering ducks, drinking fine Italian wines and making love to an Italian countess who is all that a colonel or tired business executive could wish for, — young, beautiful, adoring, compliant. In the exercise of his amours Colonel Cantwell, faithful to the Hemingway tradition, eschews four-posters: he favours a gondola which calls to mind the hospital bed and sleeping-bag of earlier Hemingway novels. The countess is bruised but likes it. ("Kiss me once again and make the buttons of your uniform hurt me".)

The love-making between the Colonel and the lady, though extended, is not of much significance; the numerous amorous interludes barely serving to relieve the monotony of the Colonel's interminable discourse on the art and meaning of war. He harangues the Countess in bars, hotels and the gondola; when she is not available as audience he lectures her portrait. But whereas Frederick Henry's reflections on war, in *A Farewell to Arms*, often achieve a kind of universal significance, Colonel Cantwell's long-winded monologues are seldom more than the maunderings of a disgruntled egotist.

For the most part Colonel Cantwell is strictly Old School Tie. He lives by a code as rigidly narrow as any evolved by generations of Blimps, — a code which decrees that the slaughter of wild life, the enjoyment of good food, good drink, and the discreet seduction of compliant women constitute the chief end of living; that in battle brute courage is the first of virtues; that a nose broken in a brawl is a mark of distinction; and that all men who do not fight are cowards.

In one important respect only, the Colonel breaks with the tradition. In the face of death he fails to keep the Stiff Upper Lip. His embittered protests against the inevitability of death when life is at its sweetest (the wines, the Countess and the ducks have just reached maturity) give him an individuality not suggested by his tedious discourses on love and war.

There are some things in *Across the River and Into the Trees* which may be recalled with pleasure for a little while; but the greater part of the book serves only as an unhappy example of how badly a novelist of genius may sometimes write.

EDWARD McCOURT.

*MY FAVORITE ENGLISH POEMS*, edited by John Masefield. The MacMillan Company of Canada, Toronto. $3.25. 310 pages.

There never was another anthology quite like this one of John Masefield's. It includes no poem which is not at least a hundred years old, none which Mr. Masefield has not known and liked for at least fifty years, and none which he justifies on any grounds except his own personal choice. Of course, there are other poetry anthologies in this personal choice category: the two — or is it three ? — volumes of Edith Sitwell's, for example. But Miss Sitwell has some very special, and rather obscure, reasons for her selections, and Mr. Masefield just says that everything in his book is there "for some reason, or want of reason", and lets it go at that. Miss Sitwell is queerer, but Mr. Masefield's queerness is more natural and appealing.

I dare say, if I tried, I could find out *why* and what makes Mr. Masefield tick. Given his own poetry, it seems logical that he is generous to three of the main romantic poets, and that Byron is not one of them. I dare say, too, there are various personal reasons, apart from their own greatness, why he gives more space to both Chaucer and Milton than any of the romantics, and twice as much to Shakespeare as to either of them. All of these poets have a nice new Masefieldian look in his pages, but they, after all, are not the highlights of the book. The highlights are the random couplets and lines, chosen from short poems and from long, scattered so generously through the collection. For example, Marvell is represented by the two lines from the *Bermudas* — "He hangs in shades the Orange bright/Like golden lamps in a green night"; Shelley's *Cloud* is reduced to the lines "That orbed maiden, with white fire laden/Whom mortals call the moon", and a sonnet of Sidney's to the statement

I never drank of Aganippe's well;
Nor never did in shade of Tempe sit:

I don't know that I could justify all these choices, but I think they are fine. Best of all is the three-page selection from Ben Johnson, which includes just this from the five acts of *The Alchemist*:

Thou looks like Antichrist, in that lewd hat.

That line alone contains the essence of James Reaney and is worth the price of the book. It makes you feel, if you have to read anthologies, that the kind with a natural queerness are the best.

J. S.

# Correspondence

*THE EDITOR:*

Having read and enjoyed *Northern Review* for some time now, I can't help but comment on the extremely pointless and childish so-called "review" of Len Peterson's *Chipmunk* in your last issue. No one is trying to claim that the book is the great Canadian novel, but if Mr. Horwood cannot distinguish between an objective book review and petty cavilling, he'd better stop right now. Perhaps being a tenth province has gone to his head!

"A microscopic examination of social insignificance, narrowness of mind and poverty of spirit" are the words which Mr. Horwood uses to condemn Len Peterson's *Chipmunk* — words which might better have led the reviewer to look more carefully at a Canadian novel which could be so described. In defining the limits of a theory of futility, defeat and negativism (which Mr. Horwood happily assumes is preposterous) Peterson has of necessity restricted himself to a level of realistic and selective detail in terms of economic and social factors. Perhaps we do not like to think that "small useless" characters like Claude exist. But they do — we see them on our way to work — and their very existence makes one aware that all is not well in the best of all possible worlds. A character who lives only by something he *thinks* he believes in, and attempts a rapprochement with equally futile persons like Mott and Faustina, is not useless or contemptible, but terrifying — as terrifying the zombies in Orwell's *1984*.

I am not claiming undue distinction for Mr. Peterson. I simply mean that a novel by a quite-brilliant radio writer merits an attentive and constructive reading which Mr. Horwood has deemed to dispense with. Perhaps what Mr. Horwood means by the fact that Claude is not treated sympathetically lies in the fact that intentionally or unintentionally, the author has failed to present a rounded personality and has left us with a one-dimensional cartoon. The fault may be a radio writer's unfamiliarity with another medium. There is no higher standard of reality from which the plot gains validity and coherence. To say that Claude is contemptible means he is being judged by standards of humanity which Claude has never known. His revelation at the end of the novel is nothing more than a squeak. He is still caught in the same social and economic rat-trap (or squirrel-chipmunk-cage) which begat him.

Instead of rapping Mr. Peterson's knuckles for daring to bring such an unworthy character before the eyes of a very worthy Canadian reviewer, it seems to me that Mr. Horwood could have seen that at least Mr. Peterson has attempted to rescue us from the equally non-human "little man" who is purified by a soapy bath of good humour and comes before us at the end spotlessly repentant. Even though it means that Mr. Peterson has deliberately cut himself off from what I can only describe as "poetry", by a relentless and often over-emphasized realistic detail, one is aware of a discipline which will stand any young writer in good stead.

Margaret Gayfer, Toronto, Ontario.

Mr. Horwood replies:

(Miss Gayfer indulges in such wide generalizations, accusing me of "petty cavilling" and misquotes me so successfully in respect to my assumptions, that it is almost impossible to reply to her attack except at length. This I do not propose to do.

I shall be content with two observations. First, my review was of the "descriptive" type, and Miss Gayfer has missed the point both in the book and in the review by failing to discern the essential mysticism in Mr. Peterson's theory of defeat. The realistic detail of the novel is merely atmosphere, background for the mystical cannibal feast in which the Chipmunk devours his friends and finally himself.

Perhaps Miss Gayfer and I take basically opposed views on the functions and purposes of art. If she judges art mainly by its brutal realism, by the extent to which it is "terrifying", then perhaps she might find the highest art of all in the medical case histories of Doctor Krafft-Ebing. She would find there characters even more perverted than the Chipmunk.

Moreover, if Miss Gayfer was terrified by the zombies in *1984*, then she must have very weak nerves. These zombies were not real people, but figments of fantasy, living in an impossible world, Mr. Peterson's Chipmunk is also a fantasy, living in a world of impossible relations. Neither the zombies nor the Chipmunk is terrible. They are, as Miss Gayfer admits, cartoons — cartoons that might be funny were they not distorted beyond caricature into the realm of the grotesque.)

# Northern Review—Guarantors' Fund

We are pleased to announce that we have reached and passed our minimum fund objective of fifteen hundred dollars, and that, as a result, Northern Review will be able to continue publication for another year. We are most encouraged by the support received from people in many parts of Canada, and we wish to take this opportunity to thank all the donors.

The amounts totalled below include all contributions up to October 31st, 1950. Future contributions will be regarded as part of the Fund for 1951-52 and will be published subsequently.

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# THE NORTHERN REVIEW AWARDS FOR 1951-52

It is the policy of Northern Review to emphasize the increasingly native character of Canadian literature, while recognizing the close ties between Canadian and non-Canadian writers and the need for an exchange of ideas and techniques. With these aims in mind, we are announcing four prizes for creative writing of seventy-five dollars each, to be awarded on the basis of work published in the magazine during the year of publication beginning October, 1950. They consist of the following:

(1) Two prizes for verse and fiction available to Canadian writers only — that is, to writers born or domiciled in Canada.

(2) Two prizes for verse and fiction available to English-speaking writers in any country, including Canada.

The same writer of non-Canadian origin is eligible for both awards in (2). The same Canadian writer is eligible for all four awards. A poem or group of poems submitted by a Canadian writer may receive both awards for verse, and a work of fiction submitted by him may receive both awards for fiction.

The prizes have been made possible by the Northern Review Guarantors' Fund and by the generous donations of persons interested in encouraging the development of creative writing in Canada.

The judges for the poetry awards will be Dr. A. J. M. Smith, the editor of *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, Mr. Alan Crawley, the editor of *Contemporary Verse*, and Prof. L. A. MacKay, Canadian writer now professor of classics at the University of California. The judges for the fiction awards will be Mr. Hugh MacLennan, well-known Canadian novelist, Mr. Robert Weaver, director of the CBC programme, *Canadian Short Stories*, and Prof. Douglass Clarke of the faculty of Sir George Williams College, Montreal.

These conditions apply to all awards:

(a) The awards for poetry will be made to the authors of poems accepted by the editors and published in one of the six issues of Northern Review beginning with the issue for October-November, 1950, and ending with the issue for August-September, 1951.

The awards for fiction will be made to the authors of the best short stories or selections from a longer work of fiction accepted by the editors and published in the magazine during the same period.

(b) There are no special restrictions on the theme, form or length of the material submitted.

(c) Manuscripts previously published anywhere or in any form will not be considered.

Manuscripts may be accepted for publication at any time between now and July 15, 1951, the deadline for contributions to the issue of Northern Review for August-September, 1951. They should be addressed to The Editor, Northern Review, 2475 Van Horne Ave., Montreal, Canada, and must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with Canadian postage or international postal coupons.

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## Contributors to this Issue

ELIZABETH BREWSTER, a young poet who lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick, has also contributed to *Poetry* (Chicago).

CHESTER DUNCAN, our music critic, lectures at the University of Manitoba. He is heard on the CBC programme, *Critically Speaking*.

J. K. HEATH is associated with the Department of English, University of Alberta. His poems have also appeared in Contemporary Verse.

IVAR HOLM, a member of the staff of Norwegian State Broadcasting, recently spent several months in this country studying Canadian radio. He is associated with *Vinduet*, Norwegian literary magazine.

ELIZABETH KAIJA lives in Raith, Ontario. This is her first appearance in *Northern Review*.

EDWARD McCOURT, well-known critic and novelist, is a member of the Department of English, University of Saskatchewan.

DESMOND PACEY is the author of the critical study, *Frederick Philip Grove*, and the editor of *Canadian Short Stories*. He is head of the Department of English, University of New Brunswick.

BELLE POMER, our film critic, who lives in Toronto, has also contributed criticism to the *Canadian Forum*.

KAY SMITH, of Saint John, New Brunswick, has contributed poems to many magazines and anthologies of Canadian verse.

ANNE WILKINSON, a Toronto poet, is well-known as a contributor to *Contemporary Verse*, *Poetry Commonwealth*, *Outposts* and other magazines.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. The Background
II. Native Arts
III. Quebec: The Great Tradition 1760-1850
IV. The Topographers. 1775-1860
V. The Pioneers. 1840-1882
VII. A National Idiom Emerges. 1912-1933
VIII. Art Broadens Its Base. 1885-1940.
IX. Quebec: A Fresh Approach. 1938-1950
X. The Artists of the Second World War
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XII. Developments in Sculpture
XIII. The Allied Arts
XIV. Art and the Public
XV. A National Art?
Appendices

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